

## Article

# Efforts Proposed by IOC to Alleviate Pressure on Olympic Games Hosts and Evidence from Beijing 2022

Weihua Yan <sup>1,2</sup>, Na Xu <sup>3</sup>, Rui Xue <sup>4</sup>, Zhenghang Ye <sup>2</sup>, Zhaoyang Wang <sup>2</sup> and Dingmeng Ren <sup>2,\*</sup><sup>1</sup> School of Management, Beijing Sport University, Beijing 100084, China<sup>2</sup> China Football College, Beijing Sport University, Beijing 100084, China<sup>3</sup> School of Psychology, Beijing Sport University, Beijing 100084, China<sup>4</sup> School of Education, Beijing Sport University, Beijing 100084, China

\* Correspondence: rendm@bsu.edu.cn

**Abstract:** Nowadays, the Olympic Games (OG) are faced with escalating complications and gigantism that frustrate the motivation of potential Olympic bidders, therefore obstructing the sustainable development of the Olympic Movement. The IOC has made numerous efforts to solve the problems, which include easing the pressure on OG hosts (including candidates) in an attempt to regain public trust and justify the delivery of the OG. Relevant countermeasures have been adopted and highlighted in the Olympic Winter Games Beijing 2022 (Beijing 2022). This study first examined the governance model proposed by the IOC, which consists of diversified stakeholders and different guiding documents. Then a typology of measures to reduce the pressure on Olympic hosts was developed, and four significant initiatives taken by different actors were identified, namely reducing economic costs and increasing financial support, setting up subsidiaries and outsourcing services, signing official partners to share the workload, and transferring organising knowledge. To be more clear, the case of Beijing 2022 was analysed to illustrate the measures proposed by the IOC. Additionally, suggestions were made to the IOC and future hosts in their preparations for the OG. The current study could add to the literature by inspiring future candidates/hosts to draw on the IOC's policy and to have a better understanding of the successful delivery of the OG.

**Keywords:** sustainability; Olympic Games; Olympic Winter Games Beijing 2022; candidate; host

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## 1. Introduction

After World War II, the Olympic Games (OG) significantly expanded in terms of the number of nations, participants, spectators, and stakeholders. Three (3) possible reasons may account for this phenomenon. First, with the development of the anti-colonial struggle and national liberation movement, the number of emerging countries continued to increase, and these new regimes had an insight into the great role played by sports in promoting their existence [1]. Therefore, they sought to join the Olympic family to gain international recognition immediately after their independence. Second, during the Second World War, women were called in to replace men in day-to-day tasks and slowly began to gain more prominence and space in sporting venues [2]. Moreover, the feminist movement that emerged in the 1960s continued to inspire women to become involved in sports [3], both in terms of sports participation and sports management. Third, the Olympic Movement has experienced rapid development in a relatively peaceful and stable environment, and as for the OG, many people held that “bigger is better”. These factors have led to the continuous expansion of the scale of the OG, and according to Guttmann, the OG experienced an era of relative good feelings [4].

The popularity of the OG was clearly reflected in the bidding trend and increasing number of bidding cities. From the 1952 OG, the number of bidding cities soared due to the rapid revival of European and American countries after the war, and the bidding

boom continued until the early 1970s (Table 1). However, the large size of the OG required host cities to invest more human, material, and financial resources, and the OG became a victim of its success. In the 1970s and early 1980s, when competing for the right to host the 1980, 1984, and 1988 Olympics, the number of bidding cities dropped significantly (Table 1). For instance, Los Angeles was the only bidder for the 1984 OG.

**Table 1.** OG candidate cities after World War II.

Edition Year Quantity			Candidate Cities (the First being the Elected Host City)
14	1948	1	London
15	1952	9	Helsinki, Amsterdam, Athens, Lausanne, Stockholm, Detroit, Chicago, Philadelphia, Minneapolis
16	1956	10	Melbourne, Buenos Aires, Mexico City, Montreal, Detroit, Los Angeles, Philadelphia, Minneapolis, San Francisco, Chicago
17	1960	15	Rome, Athens, Brussels, Budapest, Buenos Aires, Lausanne, Rio, Tokyo, Detroit, Los Angeles, Philadelphia, New York, Minneapolis, San Francisco, Chicago
18	1964	5	Tokyo, Brussels, Vienna, Buenos Aires, Detroit
19	1968	4	Mexico City, Buenos Aires, Detroit, Lyon
20	1972	4	Munich, Montreal, Madrid, Detroit
21	1976	4	Montreal, Los Angeles, Moscow, Florence
22	1980	2	Moscow, Los Angeles
23	1984	1	Los Angeles
24	1988	2	Seoul, Nagoya
25	1992	6	Barcelona, Paris, Belgrade, Brisbane, Birmingham, Amsterdam
26	1996	6	Atlanta, Athens, Toronto, Melbourne, Manchester, Belgrade
27	2000	5	Sydney, Beijing, Berlin, Manchester, Istanbul
28	2004	5	Athens, Buenos Aires, Cape Town, Rome, Stockholm
29	2008	5	Beijing, Toronto, Istanbul, Paris, Osaka
30	2012	5	London, Paris, Madrid, New York, Moscow
31	2016	4	Rio, Madrid, Tokyo, Chicago
32	2020	3	Tokyo, Istanbul, Madrid
33	2024	2	Paris, Los Angeles

With the improvement in the international economic situation and the deepening of the reform by the International Olympic Committee (IOC), the interest shown by the metropolises in bidding for the OG increased once again after 1984. However, in the commercialisation age after the 1980s, more and more stakeholders were involved in this great party [5], where they wanted a piece of the action, and the Games became a cornucopia where everyone could take what he/she wanted and needed. With more events and more stakeholders, the size of the OG has continued to grow and the complexity of the management of the OG has increased [6]. For example, the Operational Requirements for Host City Contracts integrates the preparations for the OG and Olympic Winter Games (OWG) into six (6) key areas, including products and experiences, stakeholder services, venues and infrastructure, Games services, governance, business, and participation, with several subareas under these six (6) areas [7]. It can be seen from this that the preparation of the OG is very complicated, difficult, and costly, so it is becoming prohibitive for cities that want to host the OG.

The gigantism of the OG resulted in another bidding crisis that has lasted to the present day: In spite of the claimed benefits of international mega sporting events in terms of improving soft power [8], national identity [9–11], and urban construction [12,13], only three (3) cities persevered until the final voting phase for the 2020 OG; only two (2) cities bid for the 2022 OWG and the 2024 OG after the withdrawal of many other cities, and this

lack of interest to bid for the OG persists. The huge investment led to divisions among political parties within some countries, eventually resulting in the abortion of the Olympic project [13]. In many countries, residents' opinion is not supportive vis-a-vis the delivery of the OG, claiming that public funds could be used in more important sectors such as education. Olympic protesters calls for politicians and business leaders in the bidding and host cities to assess all the economic, social, and environmental costs associated with hosting the Games [14]. For instance, local opposition played a big role in stopping the Olympic projects in Boston and Hamburg [15,16]. Therefore, a NOlympics banner was held high by protesters and a NOlympic Day was marked as the opposite of Olympic Day [17].

The lack of Olympic bidders is a real challenge to the Olympic Movement and the IOC. The OG may face the risk of being interrupted, which forms a barrier to its sustainable development, or in the worst case, this non-governmental socio-cultural movement may have to cease if the current detrimental trend is not reversed. The IOC is clear-minded on the gravity of this issue and has taken numerous efforts to get rid of the current difficulties. For example, the IOC Executive Board concluded a tripartite agreement with Paris and Los Angeles and their respective NOCs for the simultaneous election of the host cities of the OG 2024 and OG 2028. During the IOC Session in Lima, the 2024 and 2028 Games were awarded, respectively, to Paris and Los Angeles "to ensure the stability of the OG for 11 years" [18]. It is obvious that the "double award" solution aims to achieve the ultimate goal of the sustainability of the OG. Another example to illustrate the IOC's efforts is that the concept of the Olympic legacy is highlighted by the IOC to justify the cost and input of the OG in an attempt to persuade more people and cities and thus save the OG [19–22].

In addition to all that the IOC has done to reduce the pressure on Olympic hosts during the bidding for, preparation for, and delivery of the OG, organising simplified, flexible, and sustainable Games is also of paramount importance to regain the confidence of potential bidding and host cities, which is the direction of the IOC's recent reforms [23]. These principles of organising Games were carried out and highlighted in the preparation for and delivery of Beijing 2022. While the literature on IOC reform has grown recently, measures to decrease the workload of Organising Committees of Olympic Games (OCOGs) did not receive enough attention. The present study firstly reviewed the governance model in this regard, which includes stakeholders and the policy tool promulgated by the IOC. Then, four (4) essential initiatives and four (4) corresponding types of stakeholders of the OG were identified to consider the implementation of the measures promised by IOC. A case study approach was engaged in this part to explore the major reform measures from the perspective of Beijing 2022. Finally, we looked ahead to the future trend in order to achieve the sustainability of OG. With the rhetoric of the OG trap or gigantism, many cities are reluctant to apply for the Games, and many citizens are opposed to the delivery of the OG in their home towns. Thus, exploring what the IOC is trying to do in order to attain sustainable development and what Beijing 2022 has already achieved in the desired direction should give rich results, especially in terms of encouraging more cities to apply for and host the OG and so adding to the existing literature.

## 2. Materials and Methods

The case of Beijing 2022 was studied in the current research to contextualise the reform measures taken by the IOC, given that Beijing Winter Olympics is the first Games to carry out the Olympic Agenda 2020 throughout the whole process of bidding, preparing, and hosting. The motto of Beijing 2022 itself "Together for a Shared Future" is an echo of Thomas Bach's reform idea. What is more, Beijing 2022 was organised in the motherland of the authors of this study, making it easier to have access to related reference documents; so Beijing 2022 was a very typical case.

In order to better understand the experiences and perspectives of those involved in, or very familiar with the IOC's reform and the bidding and organisation of Beijing 2022,

semi-structured interviews were conducted with 19 individuals to achieve theoretical saturation. Eleven of them are Chinese given that the case of Beijing 2022 is examined in this study. While a clear interview guide framed all of our interviews, we also drew upon our extensive experience and other experts to modify the guide, thus ensuring the questions were appropriate for the experiences and expertise of individual participants. Interviewees included Olympic experts in universities, as well as officials from the Beijing Organising Committee for the 2022 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games (BOCOG). Interviews were conducted from 2020 to 2022, which happened to coincide with the COVID-19 pandemic raging all over the world. Therefore, interviewees invited to participate in this study were mainly contacted via social media platforms and/or phones. All interviews lasted between 50 min and two (2) hours, providing rich materials for our analysis. The interviews focused on the following topics:

- The actual OG governance;
- The preparation and operation of Beijing 2022 and synergies of stakeholders;
- The problems facing the IOC regarding the bidding and hosting of OG;
- Measures taken by the IOC to alleviate the workload of OCOGs;
- The future advice for attracting more Olympic hosts.

Archival material from official documentation was collected and analysed via Olympic World Library, Olympic Studies Centre, Official websites of IOC and Beijing 2022, etc. Researchers of the current study have developed good contacts with officials within the BOCOG and worked with BOCOG on legacy and Games organisation-related issues so approached some important internal documents. Moreover, the existing literature regarding Olympic reform and Beijing 2022 (in Chinese and English) was carefully examined to become familiar with the research status and to locate the starting point of our current study. To conduct the document analysis, extensive reading was performed, and secondly, the most relevant documents were further examined (IOC documents: Basic Universal Principles of Good Governance of the Olympic and Sports Movement; Olympic Agenda 2020; Legacy Strategic Approach Moving Forward; Olympic Games: the New Norm; Olympic Agenda 2020 + 5; Olympic Charter; factsheets, etc. Beijing 2022 documents: Candidature file; Host City Contract; Host City Contract Operational Requirements; Beijing 2022 Legacy Report 2020 edition and 2022 edition, etc.).

### 3. Olympic Games Governance Model

After several major crises and under high strain from inside the Olympic Movement and public institutions, the IOC focused upon the importance of governance in all aspects of the Olympic Movement at the turn of the new millennium. In 2008, the IOC put in place Basic Universal Principles of Good Governance of the Olympic and Sports Movement, which stipulated the vision, strategy, accountability, and principles of good governance that should be respected and implemented by all members of the Olympic Movement [24]. In Olympic Agenda 2020 and Olympic Agenda 2020 + 5, the importance of good governance was reiterated.

The Commission on Global Governance (CGG) defines governance as the “sum of the many ways individuals and institutions, public and private, manage their common affairs. It is a continuing process through which conflicting or diverse interests may be accommodated and co-operative action may be taken” [25]. In the context of the OG, the IOC calls on different stakeholders to work together and set up policy tools to realise the common goals to secure the celebration of the OG, which was referred to as the Olympic network governance model by some scholars [26,27].

In network analytical approaches, it is of great importance to describe relational configurations [28]. The superior–subordinate relationship is not highlighted [29]; the emphasis is on a horizontal rather than a vertical organising structure. Therefore, the network is generally decentralized. Networks may be more efficient than bureaucracy [30] because network governance refuses the top-down hierarchical organizational structure and

power operation system of the traditional bureaucratic system but emphasizes the partnership of equal cooperation.

Within the network mode, the nodes refer to the points at which longitudinal and horizontal lines intersect, namely relevant stakeholders/actors, which are linked together and share common interests [31]. Networks are flexible in that they allow stakeholders/actors from various sectors to take consensual actions to respond to existing and emergent issues [32–34]. Therefore, network governance has the advantage of bringing people and resources together. That is, through the interactions of diverse people, more original and responsive solutions to previously intractable social and public problems can be figured out.

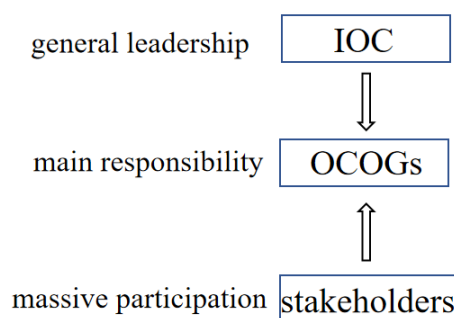
In the context of the Olympic Movement, the IOC has come to realise that its paternalism and absolute authority only scare away bidding cities and are not conducive to the development of the OG. Thus, the top-down hierarchical structure does not work, especially given decreasing potential bidders. Even though the IOC remains central, recently, its interactions and concertation with other stakeholders have increased significantly. The IOC is far from being the only organization to play a critical role in the Olympic system and no one party could organise the Olympics without the others [26]. The stakeholders are the nodes in the Olympic network that contribute to the successful delivery of the OG. Networks should include dialogue, consultation, and communication between different stakeholders organising the Olympic Games based on common goals, the exchange of knowledge, information, and resources under the guidance of common rules, proposals of solutions to problems, and the development of stable and sustainable partnerships.

### 3.1. Cooperation between Stakeholders

Staging the OG is generally divided into three (3) phases, namely planning, implementation, and wrap-up [35]. With the bidding phase, four (4) phases can be identified from the conception of hosting the OG to the post-Games phase. The first three (3) are the most critical periods to the delivery of a successful Games, where candidates or hosts put in a lot both energetically and financially.

Edward Freeman defined stakeholders as all of those groups and individuals that can affect, or are affected by, the accomplishment of organisational purpose [36]. According to the IOC, the stakeholders of the organisation encompass all members who make up the organisation as well as all external entities who are involved with, have a link or relation with, or have an interest in the organisation [24]. Different stakeholders have different needs [35,37], but one shared goal for them (organisational purpose) is to celebrate the OG.

To achieve this purpose, the IOC weaves a huge network (including the IOC, OCOGs, IBS, TOPs, etc.) with itself at the centre since the OG are the exclusive property of the IOC [38]. Additionally, the IOC emphasizes strengthening governance with various stakeholders and cooperation in order to share responsibilities among stakeholders throughout the whole lifecycle of the OG, and to improve the efficiency of all aspects of the preparations. These actors retain to some extent their independence of action while agreeing to work together on operational issues of the OG and play their part (according to one interviewee). In this way, the hosting of the OG is changed from full responsibility being taken by OCOGs to the overall participation and support of various stakeholders under the leadership of the IOC and with OCOGs taking the main responsibility (Figure 1). Some research has revealed that there are about 24 stakeholders in the OG [26]. In this study, four (4) of the closest and most typical stakeholders were examined regarding their role in the bidding, preparing for, organisation of the OG, and post-Games period, namely the IOC, IBS, TOPs, and OCOGs.



**Figure 1.** Brief governance structure for organising OG/OWG.

### 3.2. Policy Tool Promulgated by IOC

The IOC invented a policy tool to govern all the affairs related to organising the OG, ranging from the supreme and fundamental Olympic Charter to reform roadmaps and the Olympic Host Contract. What the IOC stipulated in these documents may have a very profound influence on the OG.

The Olympic Charter is the legal text of the highest level that stipulates the fundamental principles of Olympism, and the relevant rules and bye-laws adopted by the IOC. It governs the organisation, actions, and functioning of the Olympic Movement and establishes the conditions for the celebration of the OG [38]. In the 2019 version of the Olympic Charter, “candidature” is in place of the previous expression “Candidate Cities”, which means that only one candidature may apply instead of only one (1) city. That is to say, more cities could apply for one bid as a whole and preliminary competitions and even many sports could take place outside the main host city and even the host country where the cost is less. Moreover, the host city Evaluation Commission was replaced by the future host commissions. In its 2021 version, the new Olympic motto “Faster, Higher, Stronger—Together” was confirmed, which emphasizes cooperation and solidarity between stakeholders.

Olympic Agenda 2020 is the strategic roadmap presented by Thomas Bach, the president of the IOC, and was approved by the 127th IOC Session in Monaco on the 8th and 9th of December 2014. Thomas Bach highlighted the urgency of this initiative: “We have the opportunity, and we must seize the moment—now is the time for change [39].” Olympic Agenda 2020 promised changes from the bidding to the organising phases of the OG [40]. The first three (3) recommendations set in this reference document are about the bidding process—changing the candidature procedure for the OG [41]; that is to say, reforming the very first phase of delivering the OG. Recommendation 12 refers to reducing the cost and reinforcing the flexibility of OG management in the preparation phase. Recommendation 12 is about maximizing synergies with Olympic Movement stakeholders. In particular, the IOC considers the provision of turnkey solutions for OCOGs in areas that require highly specific Olympic expertise. These recommendations are attributed to aspects of cost-effectiveness in terms of bidding for and staging the OG and to aspects ensuring the highest possible sustainability of the event [41]. The IOC adopted a franchisee model in selecting Olympic host cities by which the IOC passed on all the risks to the OCOGs/hosts. This did work in a period when it was a sellers’ market for the IOC. However, when most of the cities no longer had an interest in bidding, this model was questioned and criticized. Olympic Agenda 2020 represents a shift from this model to one by which the IOC and the bid committees/OCOGs are conceived of as partners sharing, more fully, both responsibility and risk [42].

On March 10, 2021, the 137th IOC Session, which was held in a video format, re-elected Bach as the president of the IOC and approved Olympic Agenda 2020 + 5 as the reform roadmap of the IOC and the holistic Olympic Movement through to 2025, so it was of epoch-making significance [43]. The 15 recommendations that make up Olympic

Agenda 2020 + 5 were developed based on five (5) key trends that have been identified in the post-pandemic era, namely solidarity, digitalisation, sustainability, credibility, and economic and financial resilience. Many of the 15 recommendations are directly related to the organisation of the OG or sustainable issues [44]: Strengthen the uniqueness and the universality of the OG; Foster sustainable OG; Enhance and promote the Road to the OG; Strengthen the role of sport as an important enabler for the UN Sustainable Development Goals, etc. We can see from this roadmap that reforming the OG and making them more sustainable is of great concern for the IOC.

The Host City Contract (HCC), recently changed to the Olympic Host Contract (OHC), is the legal text of the rights and obligations of the IOC, hosts, and National Olympic Committee. The OHC for upcoming Games determines the responsibilities of the National Olympic Committee (NOC), OCOGs, and the host concerning the organisation, financing, and staging of the OG as well as the contribution of the IOC to the success of the OG [38]. Moreover, some other documents are in place to supplement and explain the Olympic Host Contract. For example, the Host City Contract Operational Requirements is a decomposition of the HCC or OHC from the operational level, which basically covers all aspects of the preparation of the OG, making the hosting of the Games more streamlined, convenient, and standardized. The IOC Technical Manuals, which constitute an annex to the Olympic Host Contract, are documents developed by OCOGs with the help of the IOC containing the main educational and consultative information on specific aspects, covering the organisation and operation details of the OG.

#### 4. Major Initiatives

From the Olympic Agenda 2020 to the Olympic Games: New Norm to the current Olympic Agenda 2020 + 5, the IOC worked to streamline and simplify the delivery of the OG. To this end, the IOC proposed numerous measures to support the Games and reduce the pressure of hosting the Games with the help of many stakeholders, such as reducing the number of participants on site, providing additional overall solutions to the Olympic Organising Committee, and simplifying the delivery process. What and how various stakeholders contribute to the OG from the bidding to the post-Games periods are discussed in the following part of this study.

##### 4.1. IOC: To Reduce Economic Costs and Increase Financial Support

When the OG enjoyed huge popularity, the bidding competition was fierce and very costly. It was estimated that the bidding budget for the OG was about 50 million euros [45]; it was almost the same for the OWG because procedures were more or less similar. Meanwhile, the IOC made strict requirements related to (1) the geographic area necessary to accommodate various competitive events; (2) facilities and venues; 3) the adequacy of transportation, etc. [7]. These factors were extremely important when the IOC was deciding upon where to host future Games. For instance, as well as the demands of the local population, the transportation system of Olympic hosts must meet the needs of more than 11,000 athletes, 6000–7000 supporting staff, about 5000–6000 Olympic and International Federation officials, more than 25,000 accredited media, and 100,000 to 200,000 volunteers, paid workforce, logistical staff, and security personnel for Summer Games [46]. In particular, peak travel demands must be given priority [47,48], but at the same time, how to guarantee the post-Games use of transportation should be considered.

On the other hand, the candidate cities used to overstate what they could do regarding the delivery of the Games so that they could win against fierce competition, and hosts put in lots of resources to produce extravagant Games to meet their promise, but the demands of themselves and local residents were neglected. Coupled with the lack of sustainable awareness, after just the two (2) weeks of Olympic celebration, host cities could not cover the costs [49,50] but needed to continuously invest in maintaining the venues, making the OG a veritable “white elephant”.

Adhering to the idea of reducing the costs in applying for and running the Games confirmed in various reform documents before the pandemic, the IOC continues to work to save money for Olympic hosts. For example, in the bidding phase for the Games, the new Olympic host selection procedure has begun to be implemented. In October 2019, the IOC Executive Board approved the establishment of the Future Host Commission for the Games of The Olympiad and Future Host Commission for the Olympic Winter Games, replacing the original Evaluation Committee. The newly-established committees, which have the power to recommend candidates for the OG, OWG, and the Youth Olympic Games, carry out direct and simplified communication and dialogue with cities interested in bidding, thus ending the need for so many presentations. Cities with advantageous conditions will be selected as the preferred hosts, and the other eliminated cities will not need to invest in the process anymore. The new selection method has already been applied in the process of choosing host(s) for the 2032 OG [40]. The Future Host Commission for the Games of The Olympiad has proposed Brisbane, Australia, as the only preferred city for the 2032 Games. The IOC members could only vote in favour, against, or abstain from this candidate city. In 2021, the IOC attributed the 2032 Games to Brisbane using its new candidate procedure.

In the lead-up to the Games, a positive change is that the IOC does not simply make requirements, but accompanies hosts to find solutions and aims to make sure that the required facilities and transportation modes play a long-term role in the urban and regional development [51]. Therefore, the IOC encourages the use of existing, temporary, and demountable venues and facilities. The fact that Brisbane won the right to host the 2032 Olympics is also related to its large number of existing venues. For this purpose, the IOC allows the host to “partner” with other cities when there are not enough certificated venues in one single city. The 134th IOC Session held in 2019 proposed that future OG/OWG will no longer be limited to one city but can be jointly held by multiple cities or even regions (countries). An interviewee gave the example of the 2026 Winter Olympics: “Two city names of Milano and Cortina were announced by IOC president Bach as hosts for the 2026 Games and Milano and Cortina appeared together on the emblem of the 2026 OWG, which was the first time in the history of the Olympic Movement.” Accordingly, HCC was changed to OHC. If new construction projects must be carried out, the IOC recommends that these should be embedded through the Olympic Games lifecycle. That is to say, the legacy issue is discussed with cities interested in hosting the OG as early as the bidding stage [12,38], and in the IOC questionnaire, Olympic bidders must seriously consider issues such as Vision, Concept and Legacy, Sport and Venues, Transport, etc., before they actually get the right to host the Games and present their plan in the bidding documents [52]. Legacy vision and objectives are an integral element of the Games management, co-ordination, and decision-making process [51]. After the conclusion of the OG, specific institutions should be created to guarantee the long-term benefit of the Olympic legacy.

Beijing promised to deliver an “athlete-centred, sustainable and economical” Games during its bid and has upheld these principles throughout the preparation process. Twenty days after Beijing won the right to host the 2022 Winter Olympics, “to deliver green, Inclusive, open and clean Olympics” was put forward [53]. One year before the opening of Beijing 2022, a more concrete requirement was made to host “streamlined, safe and splendid” Winter Games [54]. It is easy to see from the keywords “economical” “clean (which means no waste and no corruption)”, and “streamlined” that the organising strategy of Beijing 2022 was fully in line with the reform roadmap of the IOC.

Meanwhile, China made great efforts to integrate the host of the OWG with regional development. For example, the Chinese National Government and the local governments in Beijing and Zhangjiakou included Beijing 2022 in the National Strategy of Integrated and Coordinated Development of the Beijing–Tianjin–Hebei Region, and the vision and concepts of Beijing 2022 were in agreement with the development of the Beijing–Zhangjiakou Sport, Culture and Tourism Belt [55]. The Beijing, Yanqing, and Zhangjiakou competition zones overlap geographically with the sport, culture, and tourism belt. It was also



a positive response to the IOC's reform measures, as one interviewee put it this way: "Although the name of Zhangjiakou didn't appear on the official logo or appellation of Beijing 2022, the approval of three (3) competition zones which were located in contiguous provinces was a signal that more cities were encouraged to host OG/OWG together in order to make use of existing facilities and leave a legacy that could better benefit the region and local population."

In order to reduce the budget, Beijing 2022 made full use of the legacy of Beijing 2008 and left a number of Olympic venues qualified as "dual Olympic venue" (Table 2). The Beijing Winter Olympics had a total of 12 competition venues, including five (5) existing venues and seven (7) new venues. Four (4) of the five (5) existing venues are located in Beijing, taking advantage of the legacy of Beijing 2008. The site for the new National Speed Skating Oval was also inherited from the temporary venue for hockey and archery during Beijing 2008. The other existing venue was Genting Snow Park in the Zhangjiakou competition zone. It was already put into commercial use before Beijing 2022. In addition, non-competition venues such as the National Stadium ("bird's nest", the venue used for opening and closing ceremonies) and the National Convention Centre (Main media centre) were also legacies of Beijing 2008. The reutilisation of the 2008 Olympic venues laid a very solid foundation for the success of the Beijing 2022 Winter Olympics and contributed to the sustainable use of Olympic venues. It needs to be emphasized that technology was widely used to transfer venues from Summer Games to Winter Games within a very short period of time.

**Table 2.** Information on Venues for Beijing 2022 inherited from Beijing 2008.

Venues	Beijing 2008	Beijing 2022
National Aquatics Centre	Swimming	Curling
National Indoor Stadium	Gymnastics, handball, etc.	Ice Hockey
Wukesong Sports Centre	Basketball	Ice Hockey
Capital Indoor Stadium	Volleyball	Short-Track Speed Skating, Figure Skating
National Speed Skating Oval	Temporary venue for hockey and archery	Speed Skating
National Stadium	Opening and closing ceremonies, athletics	Opening and closing ceremonies
National Convention Centre	Main press centre	Main media centre

Regarding necessary new constructions, synchronised legacy planning was carried out from the beginning of the bid process, and whole-process monitoring was conducted, which was in total accord with the goals of the Olympic Movement reforms. Beijing 2022 promoted the establishment of a sustainability management mechanism, setting up a model of mutual benefit and win-win development between the Olympic Movement and the Host City. Olympic constructions have always been criticized for producing gentrification and huge numbers of internally displaced persons, 1.5 million Beijing residents in 2008, but for being unable to benefit the region and local residents [14]. For Beijing 2022, the problems of displacement were minimised by drawing on the lesson of Beijing 2008 and other Games, and the issues of venues and the post-Games use of transportation were considered early for the well-being of the whole host community. For example, the National Speed Skating Oval, the first professional speed skating hall in Beijing, will not only provide a training ground for professional athletes but also meet the needs of local citizens for winter sports such as ice hockey, curling, speed skating, etc., since the ice can be divided into different areas. It opens 365 days a year, and will become a sports and fitness centre similar to the Water Cube and the Bird's Nest. The Beijing–Zhangjiakou high-speed railway, a key transportation infrastructure of Beijing 2022, is part of the rail network of China (Beijing–Lanzhou high-speed railway) and was accelerated by Beijing 2022. It

serves visitors and local residents after the Games with the travel time between Beijing and Zhangjiakou cut from three (3) hours to 50 min.

Moreover, the IOC seeks to increase the financial support to stakeholders. Through business operations such as the sale of television rights and the Olympic Partnership programme (TOP programme), the IOC's revenue has been soaring. However, 90 percent of its revenue was redistributed, or USD five (5) billion in the Rio Olympic cycle, which equates to USD 3.4 million a day [56]. The fund allocated by Olympic Solidarity benefits the Olympic family and promotes the development of the Olympic Movement and the spread of Olympism throughout the world. In order to support the host cities and OCOGs, the IOC's financial assistance is increasing continuously. After the postponement of the Tokyo Olympics, the IOC also allocated some funds to the OCOGs to cover part of the extra spending. In addition, in order to reduce the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the IOC increased the amount of assistance to each NOC to help them prepare for and participate in the OG. The IOC also pledged to cover the cost of vaccinations for athletes. Moreover, a total of 236 athletes who received individual athlete Beijing 2022 scholarships qualified to take part in Beijing [57]. The IOC has pledged USD 1.5 billion in subsidies to Paris and USD 1.8 billion to Los Angeles to support their hosting of the Games. The Youth Olympics can also benefit, with Bach saying during a visit to Senegal in 2019: "The IOC will provide 90 USD million to the Dakar Organising Committee [58]." Beijing also received a substantial subsidy to organise the OG.

#### 4.2. IOC Subsidiaries: To Outsource Services

The IOC offers to provide overall solutions to OCOGs ranging from an entire planning methodology to end-to-end services, which means that the functional area that the OCOGs were originally responsible for should be undertaken by the IOC or external partners/stakeholders. In this way, the hosts will no longer be in charge of preparatory work in some specific areas, and thus their workload and pressure can be eased significantly. Approaches to providing holistic solutions have already existed throughout Olympic history, especially during the commercial age of the Olympic Movement. The creation of Olympic Broadcasting Services (OBS), the host broadcaster of the OG, is a representative example.

Prior to the Barcelona Olympics, the hosts were mainly responsible for the production of television signals for almost all the events of the OG. This model to produce TV signals resulted in some major problems. First, the hosts were therefore under huge pressure being solely responsible for signal production given the increasing competitions that were on the Olympic programme. Second, most hosts lacked both the correct professionals and broadcasting experience. Because the OG were held in different cities of the world and every single city had only one chance to organise the OG in a very short time span, the production of television signals by hosts was not conducive to the accumulation and inheritance of experience and knowledge, and ultimately affected the quality of Olympic signal production, which could be very expensive and wasteful. Finally, the signal produced by the host city would a priori highlight the performance of its own athletes, so it was difficult to maintain objectivity in the broadcasting perspective, which was not good for the dissemination of the Olympic values.

At the 1992 Barcelona Olympics, Spain's Manolo Romero innovated the way it was run. The broadcasting signals of the entire OG were produced by an international team composed of experienced personnel, who rented broadcasting equipment from different countries. Encouraged by the success of this model, the IOC took a key step. In 2001, Olympic Broadcasting Services (OBS) was established by the IOC in order to serve as the permanent host broadcaster for all OG, OWG, and Youth Olympic Games. The mission of OBS is to provide unbiased coverage as well as other services to Rights Holding Broadcasters (RHBs), share inspiring athletic achievements and spectacular Ceremonies of the Games, eliminate the need to continually rebuild the broadcast operation for each edition, and as a result create a more efficient, streamlined operation; this continuity allows OBS

to maintain the highest Olympic broadcast standards from Games to Games [59]. From Beijing 2008 Olympics on, as a subsidiary of the IOC, OBS officially took over the broadcasting area of the OG. Romero, from the 1992 Games, served as the CEO of the main broadcaster of the OG and OBS for 20 years consecutively, retiring after the London 2012 Olympics.

Reforms to reduce pressure benefited the Beijing Winter Olympics. In terms of broadcasting, what the BOGOC did was simply to innovate the National Congress Centre to host the International Broadcast Centre (IBC). On 4th July, 2021, the BOCOG officially handed over the IBC to OBS during an official ceremony taking place in Beijing. Actually, from March 2021, OBS shipped about 500 containers including building materials and professional equipment to Beijing, half of which were installed in the IBC. From that moment on, the Beijing 2022 Organising Committee did not have to care too much about the broadcasting issue since almost all the tasks (setting up facilities, writing news release, signal production, etc.) within the IBC were led and assumed by OBS with the assistance of BOCOG and relevant departments of the Beijing Municipality.

#### 4.2.1. Cost Saving

The cost was diminished with the establishment of the permanent broadcaster. OBS is very professional regarding signal production. For Beijing 2022, they built fitted-out compartments as well as broadcast studios and made better signals according to RHBs' requirements. OBS has cooperated with a construction company since the London Olympics to build a modular partition that can be reused. The prefabricated fit-out system, based on steel sheet panels, could be reused for the next three (3) Games editions, resulting in a significant reduction in construction waste [60]. According to the estimation of the interviewee, the enhanced modular and prefabricated system helped reduce the fit-out timelines by a month and half (20%). It is notable that Beijing 2022 merged the IBC and MPC into one, called the main media centre (MMC). The two (2) centres worked separately but shared one-third of the common space, saving about 28,000 square metres of area and avoiding extra equipment.

#### 4.2.2. Accumulation of Savoir Faire

With the permanent main broadcasting organisation, many useful measures and valuable savoir faire could be transferred from the previous hosts to facilitate and promote signal production and broadcasting. For instance, the 360-degree playback technology, which had been widely used and proved successful in many summer events, has also been applied to the Beijing Winter Olympics. At the Tokyo Olympics, OBS used a digital platform to record selfies for viewers, and videos of cheering and supporting athletes were transmitted directly to the venue through remote services, an initiative that was also retained at the Beijing Winter Olympics. What is more, after each competition, athletes had the opportunity to video call with friends and family on the spot. This technology, also inherited from a good attempt in Tokyo 2020 amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, was used in all venues and competitions in Beijing 2022.

#### 4.2.3. Quality of Broadcasting

For the first time in the history of the Winter Olympics, 4K ultra-clear technology was achieved to produce the broadcast signals of all competitions. Some of the key matches were even broadcast in 8K. Moreover, the broadcasting squad adopted a more neutral perspective and was devoted to capturing small touching moments embodying the Olympic values (Friendship, Respect, Excellence), according to some interviewees of this study. Ashley Caldwell of the United States, who lost the podium herself, illustrated what friendship stood for by congratulating the winner with all her heart "Taotao, Olympic champion! I'm so proud of you!" Kumaritashvili, who finished in 31st place in the men's single luge event in his Olympic debut, won the respect of the world 12 years after his cousin

Nodar Kumaritashvili died in a training accident in Vancouver in 2010. It was not about the medal, but the recovery from the sad memory for his family. Hanyu Yuzuru's quadruple axel failed but as a twice Olympic gold medallist he had nothing to regret, all he carried out in Beijing was to pursue excellence. All these beautiful and emotional moments that interpreted Olympism were highlighted by OBS.

#### 4.3. Official Partners and Stakeholders: To be Involved and Share the Workload

Another solution proposed to solve the problem of gigantism is to sign official partners and share the workload. Since its inception, the IOC has adhered to the principle of “non-commercialization” in favour of amateurism with the aim of maintaining the autonomy of the newly-established organisation and the “purity” of the Olympic Movement. Consequently, the OG were mainly invested by governments and charitable institutions before the 1980s. However, in the second half of the 20th century, the internal and external environment of the Olympic Movement underwent profound changes, and economic globalization was developing rapidly. At the same time, the scale of the OG was becoming larger and larger, but the commercial resources were relatively scarce. The 1976 Montreal Olympics suffered from a huge debt of up to USD one (1) billion. Local residents came to realise that the cost of running the OG had exceeded the affordability of the governments and charities, and the delivery of the OG was no longer regarded as “popular”, leading to the embarrassing situation in which no city or country was willing to bid (Table 1).

“Non-commercialization”, the ideology that once helped the Olympic Movement emerge from an immature event to a large-scale socio-cultural movement, became the bottleneck that shackled the long-term development of the OG. Following the efforts of president Killanin and others, Samaranch took a substantial step by completely breaking the principle of amateurism and non-commercialization and saved the Olympic Movement from bankruptcy [61]; since then, the Olympic Movement has adopted a market-oriented strategy in order to obtain more resources and impetus in favour of the development of the Olympic Movement. At the present time, the market exploitation strategy of the Olympic Movement is mainly divided into several aspects: the TOP programme and the broadcasting rights sales at the level of the Olympic Movement, and the marketing programme of each OCOGs, NOCs, and IFs.

Samaranch partnered with the International Sports Entertainment and Leisure Group (ISL), founded by Dusty Dashler, to set up the TOP programme, which is responsible for the global market development of the Olympic Movement [61]. The IOC established the New Revenue Committee in December 1981 and issued its first international marketing plan in 1985. The TOP programme supports the holistic Olympic Movement worldwide, including the Beijing 2008 and Beijing 2022 Games. The TOP programme has made the economic income of the Olympic Movement more abundant and diversified, and the Olympic Movement still benefits from the TOP programme to this day. Recently, the IOC also started to recruit suppliers as second-tier partners to mainly supply goods and services for the IOC. Let us put economic benefits aside, these partners of different levels and various fields provide the host and OCOGs with the high-quality products, services, technology, and human resources that are necessary to deliver a successful Games, with the quantity and content to meet the needs of the OG and the Olympic family (VIK), and thus helping ease their preparatory pressure.

The China-based Alibaba group joined the IOC's TOP family in 2017 as an official partner of Cloud Services and E-commerce Platform Services during the period 2017–2028, as well as a founding partner of the Olympic Channel. Alibaba provided cloud broadcast services for Beijing 2022, which was of great importance in the COVID-19 era because many tasks could be assumed by robots, bringing a new technological revolution in Olympic communication. In the case of no conflicts of interests with TOP sponsors, the OCOGs of each OG have their own marketing plan to obtain the necessary financial, technical, product, and service support for the hosting of the OG, generally within the scope of the host country. For example, as the supplier for the IOC and official partner for Beijing

2022 at the same time, the Anta group, a Chinese leading sportswear and sports equipment manufacturer, was highly involved in the Olympic Movement and preparations for Beijing 2022. Anta claimed to provide a set of waterproof and auto-heating equipment worth more than USD 2000 for each volunteer and official of Beijing 2022. Moreover, each NOC and IF are also developing their own marketing programme within their own territories. Contributions made by partners such as Alibaba, global partners of IOC, and Anta, official partners of Beijing 2022, assisted the OCOG in their preparations for the OG by bringing professional expertise and services of a certain field.

#### 4.4. OCOGs: To Transfer Organising Knowledge

In 1998, the IOC initiated the Transfer of Knowledge programme (TOK), which formally became the Olympic Games Knowledge Management (OGKM) in 2005 [12]. The goal of this programme is to back OCOGs to organise the OG based on the experience and knowledge collected by previous hosts and the IOC and to decrease organisation costs. The OGKM consists of three (3) main sources: information, services, and personal experience.

First, the information is mainly about a range of reference documents accumulated in previous OG such as the bidding documents, Official Games Reports, technical manuals, and all kinds of useful publications and documents that are available. With the information, the OCOGs can be very clear about what the previous Games did, what tasks they need to fulfil, and how to achieve that. Second, services refer to the fact that the IOC holds seminars and workshops or invites experts in related fields to provide consulting services to the OCOGs. In this way, the IOC helps them thoroughly understand the reference documents left by previous OG and to become familiar with the requirements of the IOC and accompanies OCOGs throughout the whole lifecycle of the OG. Gilbert Felli, the OG executive director of the IOC, put it this way: “We don’t just hand them the Technical Manuals and say, ‘Read it yourself and we’ll come back later’, we explain to the Organising Committee, with specialists on the subject or on the functions, how what is written can be translated into operation.” Third, OCOGs are also able to gain personal experience in Games preparations and operations through the Games-time observer programme, which allows staff members from future OCOGs to work on the current edition of the OG in order to gain first-hand experience of Games operations.

To illustrate, the Beijing 2022 Olympic Winter Games Bid Committee sent representatives to inspect and study the preparations for the Sochi Winter Olympics. After winning the right to host the 2022 Games, the BOCOG kept learning through their experience after Rio 2016, especially PyeongChang 2018. According to one interviewee from PyeongChang 2018, 98 observers from Beijing 2022 benefited from this programme. In total, 254 BOCOG staff members took part in the PyeongChang 2018 Observer and Secondment programmes [62]. The arrangements by the IOC make the inter-Games transfer of expertise and savoir faire possible, thus helping succeeding host cities to prepare for the OG more conveniently, efficiently, and in a standardized manner.

Moreover, the conclusion of the OG does not mean that the operational or contractual duties of the OCOGs/hosts are fully fulfilled. In addition to financial settlement and final report writing, the OCOGs/hosts take responsibility for assisting the IOC to organise the IOC briefing that takes place in the next host city after the end of the previous edition of the OG. This is to give future host cities (also including candidate cities) a comprehensive look at what experiences they can learn from and what could be improved from the previous OG. The objective is to provide organisers of upcoming OG with information that they can then adapt and apply to their own edition if they feel that it will improve their operations or enhance their Games vision [63].

The IOC debriefing of PyeongChang 2018, the 10th edition of the Games debriefing, started at the headquarters of the Beijing Winter Olympic Organising Committee on June 4th, 2018, for a period of five (5) days. Representatives from the IOC, PyeongChang 2018

organising committee, IPC, OBS, and seven (7) International Federations on the programme of the OWG attended the meeting and had in-depth discussions with representatives from Beijing 2022 around key areas. The debriefing, which included the strategic part and the operational part, provided important enlightenment and reference for the preparations for Beijing 2022. As some experts believed: “It is our first time to organise OWG, before the successful bidding of Beijing 2022, near one-third of winter sports events never took place in China, therefore we didn’t have enough experience in organising Games. This debriefing helped a lot by offering some key information and valuable expertise thus reinforced our confidence to organise successful Games.”

## 5. Discussion

The OG grew so big, complicated, and costly that, recently, many cities have been reluctant to bid for it, which could be harmful to the sustainable development of the Olympic Movement. In fact, successive presidents of the IOC were already aware of this problem. Jacques Rogge, the ex-president of the IOC, formed the Olympic Games Study Commission to consider issues such as the Olympic programme-setting and scale control of the Games under his tenure. The Committee presented its study to the 115th IOC Session in Prague in July 2003 in an attempt to downsize the OG. According to the report, the number of participating athletes in the Summer Olympics were recommended to be limited to less than 10,000, and some sports that were not popular excluded from the Olympic programme. However, the Commission was dissolved shortly after and many of its recommendations were put aside. Except for London 2012 Olympics where baseball and softball were removed from the OG and the scale was smaller, the following OG and OWG continued to grow in scale (Tables 3 and 4).

**Table 3.** Scale of OG.

OG	Teams	Athletes
Beijing 2008	204	10,942
London 2012	204	10,568
Rio 2016	207	11,238
Tokyo 2020	206	11,420

From the official website of the IOC.

**Table 4.** Scale of OWG.

OWG	Teams	Athletes
Vancouver 2010	82	2566
Sochi 2014	88	2780
PyeongChang 2018	92	2833
Beijing 2022	91	2834

From the official website of the IOC.

If the scale of the Games is not easy to control, another solution could be considered; that is, to help hosts ease their workload despite the growing size of the Games. It is crystal clear that the goal of these measures is to save the OG from the embarrassing situation where few cities show an interest in hosting the OG by ways of demonstrating to the world that organising the OG is affordable and acceptable so that the OG can attain sustainable development and continue to exist in the long term.

To this end, numerous efforts have been proposed by the IOC throughout the four (4) stages of the OG (bidding stage, preparation stage, Games stage, and post-Games stage), reflecting the principles of network governance under the leadership of the IOC with the participation of the IOC, IOC-related subsidiaries, partners/stakeholders,

OCOGs, etc. For example, the IOC innovates the bidding process and redistributes revenue. The organisation of the OG could be entrusted by the IOC to different cities even countries so that some construction projects could be avoided and the synergy of regional development promoted. If new construction projects must be carried out for the sake of organising the OG, planning should be carried out early in the bidding phase. IOC-related subsidiaries such as OBS take over a specific functional area and official partners/stakeholders of the IOC/OCOGs provide the host with the necessary services to deliver a successful Games. Previous OCOGs transfer organising knowledge to the following ones and assist the IOC to hold debriefings after the conclusion of their Games. Some measures date back to the 1990s but have been highlighted recently due to the lack of bidders. Of course, the participants that help organise the OG are not limited to those mentioned above: governments and many other non-governmental or intergovernmental organisations are also involved, though we cannot cite all due to the limited length of the article. As the IOC stated: governments, constituents of the Olympic Movement, other sports organisations, and stakeholders have a complementary mission and should work together towards the same goals [24]. However, this is to the detriment of the autonomy of the IOC that has had to give up its absolute dominating position because of the participation and contribution of diverse stakeholders; in essence, making stakeholders more active and engaged in organising the OG has the double advantage of increasing the profile and good governance of the Olympic Movement (the transparency, accountability, etc.) and easing the workload of the hosts.

Indeed, these measures yielded good results in Beijing 2022. As some interviewees believed: “Beijing 2008 was to some extent reproached for displacement or gentrification. But Beijing 2022 did much better by implementing the reform roadmap of the IOC and the IOC was pleased to see its choice justified because Beijing 2022 ‘secured’ the celebration of OG amidst the bidding crisis and set a good example for following Olympic bidders and hosts.” For instance, Beijing 2022 was included in the National Strategy of Integrated and Coordinated Development of the Beijing–Tianjin–Hebei Region, and in the construction of the Beijing–Zhangjiakou Sport, Culture and Tourism Belt. The OWG are not only a significant international sports event, but also a valuable opportunity to speed up the development of the cities, the regions, and even the country of China. What is more, the experience transferred by previous editions under the framework of TOK helped Beijing a lot, who were organising the winter mega-sport event for the first time, and the specially established OBS was mainly responsible for the broadcasting function area so that the BOCOGs did not have to involve itself too much in this sophisticated field and many useful broadcasting skills were preserved and applied to Beijing 2022.

Moreover, it is recommended that more efforts should be deployed to decrease the workload of Olympic hosts in the future given the fact that the Games is still expanding and that joint bidding by several cities is encouraged by the IOC. The names of two (2) cities, Milan and Cortina, appeared for the first time as Olympic hosts as a whole in Olympic history, which means the sharing of burdens but also more coordination among cities at the same time. Thus, firstly, it is suggested that more approaches should be designed to further ease the pressure on hosts in the years to come. For instance, the management of the Olympic village could be outsourced to hotel management giants and professional security companies could be entrusted with security services. If possible, TOP partnership or OCOGs partnership with enterprises could be signed to provide the services mentioned above. Secondly, it is not enough to reduce expenditure, and how to further broaden new financial sources is also a concern of the new reform roadmap of the IOC. Under the pandemic, commercial partners will be more scrutinized in terms of advertising. It is recommended that the IOC and OCOGs take measures to adjust their business plan and further promote the stability and growth of their cooperation programmes. What is more, the IOC could further diversify its revenues by using a goal-oriented marketing strategy to increase added value while striving to expand revenue sources other than broadcasting, sponsorship, and licensed goods. Thirdly, knowing how to utilise the power of the media

to demonstrate the IOC's efforts in this perspective is also significant. As Anthony Giddens and Foucault [64,65] believed, the "discourse" itself could act and has a strong shaping effect on the world in which we live. The media that control the discourse also hold the power. Most of the media report positively on the noble cause of the Olympic Movement in their communication. However, there are also some media who, for specific purposes, and via agenda setting, report negative aspects of the OG. As a result, some decision makers and voters have become spooked. Therefore, the IOC may need to better advertise what they do in terms of reforming the OG to ensure the public come to know the benefit of organising the OG and the new simplified procedures to host it. Only in this way can the Olympic bidding crisis be lifted and the Olympic values inspire people from generation to generation.

To conclude, some limitations of the current study must be mentioned. Firstly, facing so many problems, we wanted to add some positive elements to the organising of the OG amidst the scepticism and criticism, so that positive results of the OG reform led by the IOC were highlighted in this study while negative aspects were neglected. For instance, many criticize that the IOC has not behaved actively but reactively and thus is at risk of losing control [41]. Secondly, limitations regarding the qualitative interviews deserve our attention. Even though the interviewees were selected carefully, a selection bias in the choice of interviewees could not be excluded, and only four (4) main stakeholders and their actions were studied in this study due to the interviewees' opinions and subject to the length of the article. Thirdly, the environmental issue is one of the main topics related to the sustainable development of the OWG, but this issue has not been given enough attention in this study considering that the emphasis was put on social sustainability. In the future, researchers could concentrate on the environmental impact of the OWG and try to find out ways for the sustainable development of the OWG. Lastly, empirical study and relevant data are needed to investigate the measures and the effectiveness of reform.

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